



THE ART OF WAR, CORONAVIRUS AND ONTARIO COLLEGE POST SECONDARY EDUCATION: AN ADMINISTRATOR, INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Cory Ross¹ | Joshua Li² | Hannah Ross³

¹VP Acad, George Brown College, Toronto, Canada.

²Instructor, George Brown College, Toronto, Canada.

³Grad Business Alumnus, George Brown College, Toronto, Canada.

ABSTRACT

Currently due to the onset of Coronavirus, the landscape of post secondary education has changed. Lessons learnt from the novel published many years ago "The Art of War" by Sun Tze is helping administrators, instructors and students navigate the rapidly changing times. Quotations used in this book are becoming somewhat prophetic in helping all groups in our transformational journey to a digital age of education. By respecting the past and embracing the future, the changes will not have to be seen as barriers but enablers to change.

KEY WORDS: Past lessons, Change Management, Responsive, Agility, Future Thinking.

INTRODUCTION:

Ontario's 24 colleges of applied arts and technology extend a presence across the province, with more than 100 campuses delivering a wide range of career-focused education and training programs. Colleges vary in size with enrolments ranging from 1,500 to 35,000 full-time students. According to Colleges Ontario's 2019 Environmental Scan, there are over 216,000 full-time students enrolled in 24 colleges in Ontario (College Ontario Report 2018).

You don't have to look far to realize that the future has already arrived. We are living in an era of rapid and fundamental change that affects every sector in countless ways. Globalization is changing culture, politics and economics almost before our eyes, leading to faster growth and broader outlooks, but also to climate change and growing inequities. Advancements in technology are improving productivity and opening new avenues for exploration, but they are accompanied by ethical and privacy concerns, as well as fears about the rise of artificial intelligence and the role of digitization. All of this is driving social change as well: shifts in our social behaviours with the rise of social media; increasing awareness of diverse viewpoints; challenges to mental health and well-being; and new models and patterns for work.

But as we all know, in late November and December, something radically changed when Coronavirus Co Vid-19 reared its ugly head. First in Asia and then it ravaged through Europe and found its way mid March to the Americas.

In order to respond to the devastation of CoVid 19 on our conventional ways of teaching and learning, the Colleges responded with a pivot switch to online learning. Popular for some students and highly unpopular for others the switch to online learning allowed Colleges to proceed and progress with their academic offerings. After almost 10 months of being on line, it has become apparent that the teachings of Sun Tze in the Art of War are very applicable to the new ways of teaching and learning and the new paradigm of collaborative learning. There are a number of quotes in the Art of War that if adhered to and embraced will serve all the Colleges well in their redefinition of learning for the next decade and beyond.

The Art of War was written in the 5th century BC, by a military general who lived during the Eastern Zhou period of Chinese history (779-471 BC). Currently it is used worldwide in many Military Schools but its teaching and quotes are pertinent to many fields. Beyond the military battle, Sun Tzu's teachings are directly applicable to the business arena, law trial strategy, sports psychology and game preparation. (Tzu S. 2018) It is the writers impression that a lot of Sun Tzu's teachings are directly applicable to today's predicament of how to respond to the ravages of the virus, especially when it comes to education. The quotes have direct application to the art of teaching and learning as well as the relationship between the teacher and student. The following examples of quotes are but a few from the vast cannon of knowledge that is depicted in the original "The Art of War". With these quotes in mind we will embrace the possibilities of the future, preparing to meet the needs of 21st century learners.

ADMINISTRATORS:

The Art of War Quotes:

"In the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity." (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

"Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy

is the noise before defeat." (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

The workforce of the future will need different types of skills to thrive in this world of constant change. Along with job-specific skills, workers will need to develop and cultivate qualities such as innovation literacy and adaptability, digital literacy, cross-discipline interaction and communication, self-awareness, social and emotional intelligence, awareness of diversity, and leadership. Rather than preparing for a single, stable career in a particular industry, will need to be ready to adapt to change within their chosen field, and to undertake one or more career changes over their lifetime.

The rapidly changing nature of work and the impact of the digital economy are shifting the paradigms that have traditionally governed higher education. Most children born in 2017 will enter jobs and careers that have not been imagined. Even more urgent, however, is that all workers — young people graduating from high school today, mid-career professionals working in downtown Toronto, and workers new to Canada — need skills to respond to labour market needs that are changing from month to month.

Higher education needs to be adaptable and ready to meet these new realities. For example, technology is gradually replacing the textbook, allowing students to practice skills in the virtual world before they work hands-on in the real world; increasing use of simulators in all programs gives learners access to multidisciplinary approaches and brings them face to face with the possibilities and challenges of innovation. Micro-credentials (certificates for smaller, more focused programs of study), flexible delivery options, student mobility and modular learning are all ways that educational institutions can embed the qualities of adaptability and innovation into program design and learning.

Any Academic Plan worth its weight will contain at its core a central mantra of achieving and sustaining excellence in learning and teaching. In order to achieve productive and positive outcomes one must pay attention to:

- Curriculum—advancing program quality, currency, relevance and authenticity providing high-quality education; and expanding pathways to further education
- Learning experience—increasing academic supports to increase retention; advancing experiential learning; and innovation in teaching and learning
- Culture—promoting academic leadership, fostering continuing professional development among faculty; fostering continuing professional development among all staff

The amount and pace of change in the coming years has many implications for colleges and universities, not only for what students need learn, but also for how they learn and the way learning is structured.

Preparing graduates to have the global and intercultural competencies that are vital to job readiness in a global economy will be a strategic imperative. We all will want to be recognized by students, industry, and partners as a leader in producing graduates with the necessary competencies to succeed in the global work-

place. Our ongoing commitment to fostering those global competencies includes international academic and industry partnerships, faculty exchanges, and the fusion of global perspectives into curricula.

We will continue to work with our extensive network of industry, community, and international partners to ensure that we are preparing workers for the global workplace. Our aims include ensuring that new and existing programs continue to build on that global perspective, identifying programs with the potential to support international partnerships, and growing our partnerships with institutions in other countries.

Colleges collective goals with respect to increased digitization of the learning environment will be embedded in each their respective Academic Plans. The Digital Learning Initiative ought to be comprehensive, academically driven strategy embracing pedagogically. The use of effective digital learning tools, methods and ecosystems, will be fundamental to its success. Some of the component pieces embedded in the plans will be as follows:

- Advancing traditional strengths in hands-on and experiential education by enhancing hybrid/blended forms of digital learning
- Promote a culture of innovation in flexible learning led by pedagogical effectiveness
- Establish an easy-to-use, accessible, and reliable e-learning ecosystem that acts as a single point of entry for students in support of learning, engagement, and employment
- Measure and manage outcomes related to effectiveness and evaluation of innovation
- Ongoing new forms of Feedback and Assessment

Innovations in teaching and learning, increases in international partnerships, enhanced work-integrated learning and growing digitization all open up the need for new approaches as learning models evolve. Continuous assessment, peer feedback and even self-assessment may begin to take the place of traditional approaches. The college needs to be ready to explore and implement new feedback and assessment models as a part of learning innovation, and faculty and students will need ways to share ideas and new developments as they arise.

Instructors:
The Art of War Quotes:

"A leader leads by example, not by force." (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

"The greatest victory is that which requires no battle." (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

"Do not repeat the tactics which have gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances." (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

Learning and teaching also needs to complete a transition in this era of change, as old hierarchical models fall away and new models of mentorship, facilitation and lifelong learning take their place. Teachers will need to be flexible in their teaching style and delivery, and open to learning from their students. They will need to foster students' creativity and critical thinking skills, promote teamwork, and exploit technology to support learning wherever possible. They will also need to embrace digital disruption and opportunities for collaboration as they develop their own skills and areas of interest.

With respect to the relationship between student and Teacher, the trust level will be paramount in achieving a harmonious relationship between facilitation, collaboration and true instinctive learning that is not based on rote memory but the grasping of concepts that may be moulded as situations arise.

STUDENTS:

The Art of War quotes:

"Some people think insufficiency means weakness and surplus means strength, but this impression is wrong" (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

"Rewards for good service should not be deferred a single day" (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

As the pace of change accelerates, it becomes more and more challenging to predict the specific skills and knowledge students will need as they enter the workforce. Instead, people who thrive in the 21st century will do so with a combination of literacies, competencies and character qualities that they can use in any environment, so that they can adjust and adapt as jobs and working environments evolve.

Our focus needs to be on helping students acquire these flexible, transferable skills in the context of job-related programs. Students requiring more time to complete assignments, demonstrate competencies will be accommodated. Con-

tinuous reinforcement, feedback and assessment will be performed in a very timely manner. Faculty coaching and mentorship will underpin the entire educational journey. Every student will have a strong bond to their faculty and preceptor.

For Higher Education

"Quickness is the essence of the war." (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

"Opportunities multiply as they are seized." (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018)

For teaching and learning to evolve, college infrastructure will need to change to support it. Colleges and universities need to adapt or retool, remaining open to new models of how learning is designed, delivered and received.

Higher education is entering a new phase of fluid time frames, modular delivery, competency-based learning, micro-credentialing, and personalized learning. Focusing on the principles of adult learning, we need to teach through the disciplines, encourage transfer of learning, and make learning relevant to the "big picture" of a student's future working life. We will need to support faculty members by renewing its concentration on faculty competency, well-being and professional development. By focusing on new ways of learning and teaching, we will be better placed to prepare students for a world in which they will need to design and drive their own learning. It will also allow us to become a place that students will return to when they need to acquire new skills or credentials over their lifetime.

Work-integrated learning will now include internships, apprenticeships, service learning, campus incubators, applied research projects, practicums, co-ops, field experience and clinical placements. This type of learning is context-based: the student is actively engaged in ongoing learning in the complex context of an actual work setting, and the work environment presents the student with competing demands. The use of electronic platforms, gaming and simulation may with great planning and execution may mimic the real world. In this case once achieved, all students may have an opportunity at to participate in a meaningful virtual experiential learning event.

We will use these supports to ensure that student experience at the college reflects the needs of the 21st-century learner.

Our goal is to develop the foundational aspects of this academic plan within a learning infrastructure of leading-edge research, well-connected and passionate faculty, innovative learning strategies, relevant and engaging assessment strategies, learning communities that engender a sense of identity, and practice-based learning. Learning at George Brown College will continue to be supported and inspired by career services, student journeys, partnerships/collaborations, and research with impact.

In keeping with the quotes and true to the body of knowledge found in the The Art of War text in order to provide the foundation of a strong teaching and learning platform, we need to ensure that pedagogical approaches, program delivery, and student services are designed to contribute to a highly skilled workforce and to ensure positive student outcomes. This means delivering high-quality learning experiences—such as experiential, entrepreneurial, personalized, and digital learning—to prepare students for rewarding careers. But it also means supporting faculty by providing high-quality in-class and online experiences, and by facilitating connections between faculty to share best practices—not only within programs, but across programs and even divisions.

In order to achieve the new normal of this educational paradigm, speed, quickness, strategic investment and detailed planning will be essential. There is a lot to learn from the old novel that is very relevant today. Those who act quickly and decisively will live to endure another chapter in their ongoing development. Those Colleges that ignore the passages will be doomed for obsolescence. The movement to change the existing educational paradigm was already there, Coronavirus just sent it into a more rapid transformation. Let's all learn from the wisdom of the past as we embrace the new future.

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We have developed goals in this area that are aimed at facilitating the development of new, more flexible programming; increasing partnerships both inside and outside the college; and providing avenues for faculty to communicate and share innovations in teaching and learning.

CONCLUSION:

In keeping with the resonating quotes from the Art of War novel, we must prepare graduates to have not only a local focus but also a global perspective. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic we witnessed how small the world is and how we are all interconnected. Intercultural competencies will be vital in order for our graduates to succeed in a global economy. We all want to be recognized by students, industry, and partners worldwide as leaders in producing graduates that will work and thrive in the global workplace. Our ongoing commitment to excellence in teaching and learning in our respective institutions. By holding true to this poignant quote “Do not repeat the tactics which gained you one victory, but let your methods be regulated by the infinite variety of circumstances” (Giles 2013, Tzu S. 2018), our respective transformational 2030 educational journey will be a great success.

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